

Public Initiatives: New Europe and New Britain

ACCORDING TO Philip Mairet, the various public projects set in motion by Mitrinović and his followers, such as the Adler Society, can really only be understood as instruments or vehicles for the personal development of the participants. He suggested that the publicly proclaimed goals of such organisations were subordinate to their real purpose – the furtherance of the initiation process through which Mitrinović was guiding his intimate associates, observing that:

Every one of the public projects launched by DM came to an end, usually chaotic, after a brief life of intense activity and sacrificial expenditure. But this is the way with most, if not all authentic esoteric schools; any enterprise or organisation they undertake in the outer world must be of some public value or interest, but that is not the primary purpose. It is a communal exercise, which the teacher ordains for the development of the pupils as individuals: they must not be allowed to identify themselves with it, still less must the school or the teacher himself become committed to that exoteric work. It must achieve some success; but then it must be dissolved or abandoned.¹

There is much in the life of Mitrinović, especially during the decade prior to the Second World War, that lends support to such a thesis. During the 1930s his followers were involved in a myriad of public ventures on a variety of fronts. Most of these enjoyed only a brief, if active, life before they became transformed into some new organisation with a new name, a slightly different emphasis in the public programme and image, but composed largely of the same personnel. There was an apparent refusal on his part to commit himself to any public initiative for any lengthy period of time. Often

it would seem that he had no sooner directed his own energy and that of others into one project before he had abandoned it for some new scheme. Mairet explained this phenomenon as a natural consequence of Mitrinović's group as an 'esoteric school':

Turning the attention of pupils to some public work is an absolute necessity if the group is not to sink into obscure self-regarding *inactivities*. But at the same time, when the public undertaking has been brought to some success it must be dropped; otherwise it becomes a society for some special study or work which is not what it was formed for. And then the teacher himself would lose his central importance and his initiative.²

The implication in this analysis is that Mitrinović withdrew his support from public initiatives and redirected the energies of his associates from fear of losing his pre-eminent place as their teacher and guide. It is in fact true that he never allowed those who worked closely with him to become too deeply involved in any one public initiative. However, amongst those who suffered and were frustrated by his apparent whims and changes, there were some who on reflection came to the view that this mirrored his concern to stop them becoming blinkered and bogged down, overly committed to one single project or aspect of his holistic philosophy and programme, and thereby losing sight of the wider perspective. He had a great fear of things becoming institutionalised and 'fossilised'. Initiatives must be ever-changing, in a continuous approach towards the truth. An endless process which he expressed in the notion of *Infinale*. Moreover, as truth itself was many-sided, his personal method, as he had written in 'Aesthetic Contemplations', consisted in 'embracing the whole horizon of truths, no matter how disparate and paradoxical, and thus, through casting furthest and encompassing most, coming closest to the truth and aiming closest to the centre.' This personal method was reflected in his approach to communicating with disparate audiences beyond his own circle of friends and co-workers. Each public venture expressed a partial truth and insight but not the whole. Therefore a variety of schemes and enterprises were called for, each embodying a dimension of the whole. Moreover, if truth was many sided, then different potential audiences and constituencies required different messages and different channels for the communication of such messages.

All this helps to explain what still remains something of a puzzle – the way in which Mitrinović would launch new public ventures, to abandon them for some other enterprise when it seemed that they were about to ‘take off’. Further light is cast on the question, however, when one considers the fact that throughout the 1930s his sense of urgency about the crisis facing the international system and his fear of an impending world catastrophe was growing. So grave was the situation that it called for guerrilla-type tactics to jerk people out of their lethargy and resignation. The strategy was to hit folk with a continuous stream of new ventures and propaganda ploys – anything that would shake the British especially out of their complacency.³

This sense of urgency and the need for action in the face of impending crisis was reflected as early as 1931 with the launching of the Eleventh Hour Flying Clubs. The call was raised, ‘Join with us immediately, it is the eleventh hour’. The platform was for European federation as a step towards world federation, financial reform, and the reconstruction of the state. Those who responded to the call were invited to contact Mrs. Helen Soden and Mrs. Ethel Mairet, the wife of Philip Mairet.⁴ People were encouraged to form Eleventh Hour Clubs in any house, town or village ‘before it is too late’. The emphasis was upon the ability of those of ‘sound human intelligence’ to cooperate together to generate sufficient impetus for the re-ordering of social, economic and political life: ‘We live together: we must now THINK and prepare to ACT together.’ Clubs, once formed, were advised to ally themselves with others to form a federation: ‘Together all clubs should constitute a new personal alliance for the regeneration and preservation of our social-life.’⁵

By 1932 the Eleventh Hour Clubs initiative had become the Eleventh Hour Group with offices at 60 Gower Street. In one of their leaflets issued in August 1932, signed by Lilian Slade, the need for financial reform was emphasised:

Science, machinery, workers, can bring to our doors wealth from the ends of the earth to enhance health and comfort and enjoyment. Only one thing is lacking – that is the proper distribution of all this wealth. The meaning of money is abused and power has been taken by the few to enslave the many ... The XI Hour Group proclaims the possibility of altering this state of affairs ... The XI Hour Movement is acting directly towards economic change, by speaking publicly the

facts of the present false system and stating the rational way of distributing wealth throughout the community by National control of the issue of credit. This requires a revolution in thought and revolution of will.

In the autumn of 1932 a series of ten lectures on the need for monetary reform and social credit was organised under the auspices of the Eleventh Hour Group at 55 Gower Street.

Another group also blossomed into existence in 1931 which seemed to enjoy an even shorter life than the Eleventh Hour Flying Clubs, to judge from available records. This was The Women's Guild for Human Order which called upon women from its headquarters at 'International House', 55 Gower Street, to join together to 'rediscover the meaning and function of womanhood and express it in the modern world.' Competition between the sexes was condemned: 'woman as complement to man must relearn to cooperate.' Woman was essentially the 'preserver of life' who must supply purpose to the cold reasoning and inventiveness of man. As with the Eleventh Hour Clubs, women were urged to join together with friends and neighbours and to work at the level of day-to-day life to create a better world:

Any woman can begin today in her own sphere by making an inspiring background for the men she meets, enabling them to act positively and optimistically in the world; she can and must realise how necessary is her right attitude and support to his right action.

It is extremely doubtful whether any of these groups ever consisted of much more than a set of letter-headings and nominal office-bearers. At the same time they were of significance insofar as they provide some indication of the type of analysis that was being elaborated by Mitrinović and his co-workers during this period, and also provided pointers to the forms of organisation and action that were to be developed further as the 1930s progressed.

An early expression of these ideas as they pertained to the British political and social scene was contained in a 1929 publication of the Chandos Group entitled *Politics: A Discussion of Realities*.⁶ The contributors started from the initial recognition that the co-existence in society of unfulfilled needs and unemployment was enough to show that society was wrongly organised. These unmet needs embraced not only material want but also those of the mind and the spirit. 'There is', it was argued, 'a deep and instinctive need in

every one of us to feel himself of value to his fellow men; and to find a function which he can usefully fill in our common life.⁷⁷ There was, therefore, a fundamental need to consciously reorganise society. In an age characterised by diversity and the division of labour, one could no longer rely on the social good developing automatically from the innate nature of individuals. Similarly, one could not rely on the established politicians and political parties, each of which only represented partial and sectional interests.

To achieve this reorganisation it was necessary to recognise that politics was only one function of society, one dimension of human activity, and that there were others – the economic and the cultural in particular. ‘The ultimate aim of politics is such organisation as will free men to fulfil their economic and cultural needs.’⁷⁸ From this it followed that it was necessary not only to severely limit the powers of the central political authorities, but to devolve such powers to other central and local bodies. ‘It demands’, the Chandos Group argued, ‘a technique of representation sufficiently complex to correspond to the versatility of man’s nature. A democratic society will therefore be one in which there are several coordinating representative bodies.’⁷⁹ Amongst such bodies, it was suggested, there should be local and central Economic Councils which would coordinate the activities of the organisations of producers that would have control of the economic sphere of life.

A true politics will not attempt to organise production. It will only see that men are, as producers, properly related to each other in order to organise their productive work themselves. This will involve the control of each industry and profession by its own organisation of workers, subject to their mutual adaptation in general councils, and right relations with the whole community of consumers.¹⁰

Likewise, the institution of Cultural Councils was called for:

A conclave of the higher interests of the nation, consisting of the men of known achievement in all science, learning and art, legislating for education, assisting the coordination of the sciences and improving facilities for culture and leisure.¹¹

Let us assume that the reference to ‘men of known achievement’ reflected the linguistic style of the day, and did not reflect the belief that the ranks of ‘known achievers’ was the exclusive preserve of men. Be that as it may, the authors were convinced that the type of reconstruction of state institutions for which they were calling would be impossible to achieve without a radical reform of

the financial system. The control of credit and the supply of money, it was argued, lay in the hands of the private banks and financial institutions beyond the control of the state or the community. Such institutions, through the issuing of credit and the creation of debt, preserved their control over a wide range of human activities. Thus, it was posited, unemployment was largely due to a chronic lack of purchasing power, caused by the 'inadequacy of the financial mechanism in each country to effect the sale of the increased quantities of goods which is made possible by industrial and scientific progress.'¹² Following the theories developed by Douglas in *The New Age*, the contributors seemed to believe that a technical change in the accounting system would facilitate the necessary transformation of the financial system so as to allow 'money to be administered solely in the interests of the community's powers of production and needs of consumption.'¹³

All these ideas and proposals were reflected in less developed form in the publications issued by the Eleventh Hour Group and the Flying Clubs. Similarly, their injunction that people should set about forming their own discussion groups and seek to implement the ideas in the realm of their daily life was also contained in *Politics*: a new age required a new citizen.

The task of the new citizen will include not only – not even primarily – the organisation of political societies, but the organisation of the very sphere of life in which he finds himself. He will know and feel the roots of all politics in the structure of everyday life; he will know how the health of public discussion depends upon the relations that prevail in more intimate cooperation. To make his household communal, to make his business cooperative in spirit and practice, and to share his life of recreation and ideals with others – these will be his sure and certain work upon the very foundations of politics ... the State's politics, different as they are in form and application, are all based ultimately upon these lesser politics of social gathering, factory, office or fireside. It is from the daily activities of such individuals that a new politics will be born.¹⁴

Ultimately, the contributors to *Politics* argued, the future of Britain and of the world depended 'upon those citizens, whoever they may be, who can rise to world-orientation and maintain it in the affairs of the common life.'¹⁵ But if the future of Britain lay in the devolution and decentralisation of power and decision-making, the future of the world lay in federation. Such a development,

however, could not be imposed by some super-power: 'The solution of the world problem – the "parliament of man and federation of the world" – can only come from the cooperation of free peoples.'¹⁶

World federation, then, was 'the inescapable need as well as the highest hope of the future.'¹⁷ But such a development within the international system depended, in the final analysis, upon reconstruction within societies and changes in the consciousness and actions of individuals. Moreover, in the evolution towards such a world system, a particular responsibility lay with the British people, the British nation:

Her own foresight and sagacity, apart from loftier ambitions, should impel England to work openly for the synthesis of world politics and world economics; now that her relative supremacy cannot endure for very many decades. Hers is potentially the world language, hers is the widest world empire, which might be the pattern for the Republic of Mankind, and hers and hers only whilst there is yet time, is the greatest persuasive power to propose it. No enterprise in her whole history, full of glory as it is, could equal such an effort in splendour and historical consequence.¹⁸

It is not clear how much Mitrinović had thought through his notion of the British empire (not the *English* empire) as a template for a benign world commonwealth, but it is clear that he saw the achievement of European federation as a key step on the road to such a world. The significance of Europe, from his point of view, was that this was where individual self-consciousness was most highly developed. However, like others in the inter-war years (and since), Mitrinović feared the threat to individual liberty posed by what he called the 'block state,' the over-centralisation of power and control. To avoid this he called for a 'revolution of order': a consciously planned and voluntary transformation guided by the twin values of devolution and federation. These represented the two opposing principles upon which every human organisation was based – the forces of cohesion which tended to preserve unity and stability, and the forces of diversity which tended to preserve individual differences and freedom. Devolution, the application of the principle of diversity, meant that every decision should be taken in the smallest possible grouping of those who either had to implement it or would be affected by it. Such devolution, if it was not to result in chaos, needed to be complemented by an equally strong

commitment to the principle of federation – all those with a common interest through their work, place of residence or cultural activity should consult together to reach agreement on matters of shared concern. The ideal of devolution was complete liberty for every individual. The ideal of federation was total harmony between all people and groups up to the level of world federation, with the will of the larger whole or grouping continually prevailing over the smaller. Tension and conflict between the two principles was therefore inevitable and neither could ever be fully attainable, yet Mitrinović insisted that they be taken as regulative ideals, each to be taken as an absolute guide to action – the conflict and tension between the two would mean that neither would prevail at the cost of the other.

To promote and develop these ideas a new organisational vehicle was launched in 1931 – the New Europe Group (NEG). Unlike many of the other groups and movements initiated by Mitrinović the NEG was to enjoy a relatively long life, continuing after the Second World War until its last recorded public meeting took place on September 21st 1957 to commemorate the death of Professor Frederick Soddy the previous year. Despite this, its early recruiting leaflets bore a striking resemblance in style and content to those issued by the Eleventh Hour Group.

The New Europe Group is convinced that the PRESENT SITUATION can only be saved from BECOMING DISASTROUS by the active cooperation of individuals. Politics have failed ... We are drifting towards violence for want of vision. There is no school of thought which has surveyed the situation as a whole ... No one is proclaiming that all man's activities are interrelated, since the forces which produce these activities are all connected at their source, which is the human organism. And no political or economic system which fails to take into account all man's needs and potentialities can satisfy the individuals who make up a community ...

This Group proposes that similar groups should be formed in a rapidly growing organisation designed to gather together those who wish to examine the situation and inform themselves of what are the possibilities for a reconstructed, renewed social order.¹⁹

Once again interested people were invited to make contact at the Gower Street address. The secretary of the NEG was Winifred Gordon Fraser, who had been working in a South Kensington bookshop when she had been 'discovered' by Mitrinović who promptly

recruited her as his secretary and general factotum. She was to remain a devoted colleague and co-worker until his death. One of her first tasks as secretary of the NEG was to solicit support and assistance from various influential personages. Amongst those contacted were Sir Charles Trevelyan and Sir Patrick Geddes. Trevelyan decided against lending his name to the new organisation, observing that ‘in some ways the aspirations sound very good, but it is all quite vague ...’²⁰ Geddes responded positively, and readily agreed to accept nomination as President.²¹

Other recruits were drawn in through the series of lectures that the new group organised. The first lecture of which a record exists was delivered by Mitrinović on December 7th 1931 on the theme of ‘A united Europe in a world order’. Amongst those who attended this series was a graduate of Glasgow University, Watson Thomson, who had recently moved to London after working abroad in Jamaica and Nigeria. On about his third visit to the Gower Street premises he encountered Mitrinović for the first time, heard him speak, and was enthralled. As he recalled in his autobiography:

I went home to my little attic room in a daze. Here, I thought, is a very great man. Here is the kind of wisdom the world desperately needs ... Why have I never heard of this man? Why is he not proclaiming to the world? Why is he wasting his time with a little Bloomsbury lecture society? Who is he anyway?

As may well be imagined, my attendances at Gower Street became more regular after that, though DM did not appear again for quite a long time. Meanwhile I got to know some of the officials of the two societies and did some writing jobs for them, preparing new pamphlets – projects which brought me to Gower Street in the afternoons. One afternoon a girl, one of our volunteer typists, came up to me and said, ‘Mr. DM would like to meet you. Would you come downstairs and have tea with him?’

In some excitement, not unmixed with trepidation, I descended the stairs to a large basement room. It was a strange room, dark and cluttered, its walls lined with books, dark draperies everywhere, some paintings here and there, and many objects of symbolic shapes suggestive of Oriental rather than Western cultures. But all this I registered then merely as a somewhat exotic atmosphere: my attention was focused on DM, who welcomed me with dignity rather than with any effusive warmth. He asked many questions about my background: indeed, most of our time was spent in my giving a general account of

myself. Three or four others were present. An hour passed pleasantly, nothing of great significance transpiring.

Thereafter I became more and more involved in the practical affairs of the lecture societies and developed a steadily increasing admiration for and friendship with some of those who were carrying the considerable burden of these expanding organisations. I began to learn something of, and to identify myself with, their ambitions – for the New Europe Groups especially.²²

In the summer of 1932 the NEG organised a series of lectures at the Caxton Hall, Westminster entitled ‘Popular Myths Exploded’. The advertised speakers included Frederick Soddy, Arthur Kitson, J. Macmurray, Raymond Postgate, Hamilton Fyfe, Gerald Heard and J. V. Delahaye. Amongst the myths that they exploded were ‘That poverty is of God,’ ‘That science will see us through,’ ‘That the press is instructive to the public,’ ‘That capitalism has anything further to offer us,’ and ‘That there is nothing to be done about it.’

Mitrinović was clear in his own mind what should be done. The human community was an organism and must be reconstructed as such – in the form of the three-fold state advocated by Rudolf Steiner, wherein economics, politics and culture were made the responsibilities of three different assemblies. Guild socialism and social credit, regionalism and devolution – all were necessary. Above all else, however, was the need for the perfected individual: ‘Self-guidance, self-integration, self-realisation; that is the aim of our Group,’ as one member expressed it.²³

For this to be attained a final myth needed to be exploded: the separateness of the individual. It was in this regard that Mitrinović located the significance of Europe in what he conceived to be the evolutionary development of the world and humanity. It was in Europe that individualism had reached its furthest point, therefore it was natural that ‘Europe must take the initiative to turn individualism into communal recognition of personality and personal acceptance of community.’ The lead role in this was allocated to Britain – ‘her position as inheritor of European civilization and as the founder of a great empire gives her this unique position of responsibility.’ This was the initiative demanded of the British people:

We do not believe that 'Nothing can be done about it,' but for New Action, we need New Minds, New Men. The British people pride themselves on their colonies. There is a new realm to conquer, the realm of Spirit and Deed, where Personal Initiative unites in Personal Alliance to create a New Social Order. Then will arise a New Britain which by her sound sense and courageous action will lead the way to World Socialism and World Peace.²⁴

Reading this now, a lifetime since the words were written, one cannot help but be struck by the utter fantasy he was portraying. But we have to remind ourselves that it is highly doubtful whether Mitrinović himself seriously believed in the likelihood of such an eventuality – a transformation in human relationships within Britain heralding a European revolution of order that would in turn exercise a determining influence on the future evolution of world society as a whole. But this was the hallmark of the utopian activist – this was a myth, a vision that was worth expounding and exploring, it was an adventure worth pursuing. Whatever intellectual scepticism Mitrinović experienced – and whatever else he was he most certainly was not a fool – he always believed it was necessary to act with the utmost confidence if one was to achieve anything, no matter how unrealistic, fantastical and utopian the goal. His invocation left some members of the NEG cold, however. One of them jotted his thoughts down in the margins of the printed commentary on the lecture series:

I hate to say it but I do most earnestly implore the New Europe people to revise the *tone* of their appeal to the country. This sort of thing simply won't go down, and if put to the people in this way the campaign is already doomed to failure ... Don't know who is responsible for this last page but no matter what real truth it embodies, the manner of it is entirely alien to the English mind ... Stick to Professor Sir Patrick Geddes. I implore Mr. Mitrinović to learn a little of the psychology of the English *people*. At present, obviously, he only knows the intelligentsia!

Following the 'Popular Myths Exploded' lecture series, plans were laid for the next major public initiative – the launching of a journal. The first issue of *New Britain Quarterly* was published in October 1932. Watson Thomson and David Davies, a former coal-miner, socialist and Congregationalist minister from Wales, were the co-editors. Nearly forty years later Davies recalled just what being an editor on one of Mitrinović's publications entailed:

Late one Sunday night in August, 1932, after a day in Bournemouth, I was at supper in Bogey's bar, in Southampton Row. There I found Mitrinović – an unexpected and pleasurable meeting. He broke the news to me that he was bringing out *The New Britain Quarterly* in October, 'and you are to be editor,' he said casually. The fact that I knew nothing about the trade of journalism or of type setting, lay-out and a hundred and one other things was immaterial. That I was to edit was the great thing: I was immediately in ecstasy ... I burst with a sense of importance, and set about the task of planning the first number. But Mitrinović could not be got to discuss it with me ... But at last he asked me to go to the printers and discuss the size, format and other details of the proposed quarterly. I did so, and got a dummy copy made up in a green cover, similar in size and shape to the 'XXth Century' magazine ... When I took this outcome of hours of work with the printer to Mitrinović, he threw it into the wastepaper basket after one withering, contemptuous look. 'You are not going to stab the Unconscious of the Englishman with *that* kind of thing,' he said. And in the next ten minutes he sketched out the format and design of the magazine ... I began to learn that to be editor meant being Mitrinović's office-boy.²⁵

The quarterly magazine that emerged from Mitrinović's sketches had the unusual page size of 16x14 inches, laid out in three columns. It provoked the printer to ribald laughter, but the first issue sold some 2000 copies and Davies was forced to concede that the odd format exercised some kind of appeal to readers. The contributors included some familiar names from Mitrinović's circle: Soddy, Delahaye, Philip Mairet, and Professor J. Macmurray. Mitrinović's name did not appear – but his mark was everywhere to be seen. He suggested the contributors to be sought out, he produced relevant European material for inclusion (amongst which were translations of Van Eeden and Gutkind), he chose the illustrations, and decided what books should be reviewed. He also, with an eye to the future, decided to promote certain members of the group by printing under their names extracts of articles or lectures that had been produced by other group members.

In an article in the first issue entitled 'New Europe – New Britain,' Delahaye explored the nature of the world crisis confronting humanity and outlined the changes necessary to bring about a 'revolution of order.'

It is a total revolutionary change that is necessary. We are sick, culturally, politically, economically. Leaders continue to tinker with symptoms, whereas it is the disease which has to be attacked. It is a new way of life and work that must be established. Not planning only is required but planning for a new purpose. That purpose, briefly stated, is to achieve a maximum of individuation, i.e. the maximum devolution of power and significance and responsibility in the spheres of politics, economics and culture, upon the maximum number of individuals. Each individual then must see to the change in his own outlook, rather than urge others to take the first step. And, though our ultimate vision is one of world unity, New Britain is our immediate task, and New Europe the setting in which it must be conceived.²⁶

For the second issue of the quarterly Mitrinović sent Valerie Cooper and Winifred Gordon Fraser to Tring in Buckinghamshire to solicit an article from 'the father of guild socialism', S. G. Hobson. Hobson had left Orage's *The New Age* shortly before Mitrinović began his 'World Affairs' series and had since retired to the country. He was, by many accounts, a difficult person to work with. According to Davies he was even more prickly than Frederick Soddy: 'If Soddy was a porcupine, Hobson was a hedgehog. He was all toes, with corns on every one of them.'²⁷ Montague Fordham, a contributor to the first issue, remarked that if Hobson 'were one of the Twelve Apostles, he would find a reason for resigning in less than a month!'²⁸ Despite this Hobson was to remain associated with Mitrinović and his circle for many years, confessing to a friend that 'these young people found me old and weary. Now I almost wish I were young again.'²⁹

Sales of the second and third issues of the quarterly failed to match those of the first. It continued to appear until Autumn 1934 – but with constantly changing names. By October 1933 it had become *The New Atlantis*: 'for Western Renaissance and World Socialism.' Mitrinović's name appeared in this issue for the first time when, as general editor, he addressed an 'Urgent Appeal to His Excellency the Chancellor of the Reich.' This concluded with the rhetorical appeal:

Oh German! Man! Adolph Hitler! hero and saintly man! Your Germany is leading on to war, to self-extinction of the Continent, of which Germany is the form and the spine.

Propose Disarmament, to Germany and to France! Propose the Atlantic Alliance to England and to U.S.A.! Your own violence and bloodshed would be consecrated and forgiven.³⁰

Such a 'bizarre and utterly impossible proposal' was, for Davies, a perfect illustration of Mitrinović's 'fatal and fundamental weakness: his adherence to fantasy.' And yet he combined this with what Davies conceded was 'a profound skill in political analysis.'³¹ Thus, in the same issue of *New Atlantis* he urged Britain to adopt one of a number of alternative strategies. If war was to be avoided Britain must either 'take a new and final initiative for the United States of Europe' or else declare to the world that she would act against 'the aggressor in any future European war and will side positively with the nation or block of nations that might be attacked.' The NEG was urging at this time the need to bring the U.S.A. and the U.S.S.R. into a defensive alliance with Britain in order to counter the burgeoning threat of a European war.

By April 1934, after two issues, *New Atlantis* was transformed into *New Albion*: 'for British Renaissance and Western Alliance', which in turn was re-labelled in the autumn as *New Britain*: 'for British Revolution and the Social State'. Whilst this was the last number to appear in what might be described as the '*New Britain Quarterly* series,' a lot had happened in the two years since the publication of the first edition. Amongst other things, the people gathered around Mitrinović in their Gower Street headquarters had found themselves at the centre of a growing socio-political movement – the New Britain Movement (NBM).

The NBM had grown out of the New Britain Group which had developed around the quarterly. Initially it differed from the New Europe Group only in emphasis – Britain and domestic affairs, rather than Europe and world affairs. The new group was tasked to 'conceive a New Britain'. Their pronounced aim was to plant the seed of an alternative, 'above and between' communism and fascism. The universe, it was argued, represented a synthesis of balanced opposites, and civilisation would perish unless a similar synthesis of community and individuality, the forces of cohesion and diversity, federation and devolution, could be generated. Communism and fascism both represented efforts to solve this problem.

They are obvious over-compensations. Russian communism is a Slav compensation for its own repression of rational thinking over long centuries during which Europe was developing intellectually. Fascism is both an imitation of, and a reaction against, communism. It imitates the method – the sinking of the individual for a common cause – in order to emphasise the necessity for a dictatorship of a different order.

Must our attitude towards both of these take the form of an imitation of, or reaction against? Must we eternally accept a thesis or produce an antithesis? ... It is for us to solve this problem of Community versus Individual in our own way.

The New Europe Group exists for this purpose. If England with her tradition of wisdom and leadership will recognise that by facing this problem and helping Europe to face it a new and lasting peace can arise ... A deliberate effort directly contrary to the line of least resistance is necessary before we can understand the meaning of England's significance. The New Europe Group was such an act – a still more conscious act is necessary if that understanding is to be applied. THE NEW BRITAIN GROUP has now been formed.³²

The year in which the New Britain Group was formed, 1933, was the third year of the great depression and also the year of Hitler's rise to power. There was widespread belief that bloody class warfare was imminent, with societies being torn apart by violent civil strife between the forces of the right and the left, fascism and communism. Both these creeds, according to Mitrinović, contained elements of the truth. Communism's emphasis on socialism and equality was absolutely correct when applied to the economic sphere. Fascism's concern with hierarchy and the superiority of some people compared to others was equally correct when applied to the cultural sphere, for we are not all equally gifted when it comes to creativity or the appreciation of creativity. But both fascism and communism were dangerously wrong when applied to the whole of life as universals. What was required was the creation of a social order wherein different organisational principles were applied to the different spheres of life.

As we go about our daily life we perform different functions: as producers and consumers in the economic sphere, as citizens relating to others in the political sphere, and as unique individuals with our own special abilities, ideals and talents in the cultural sphere. A proper social order, then, would be one which acknowledged these different functions – one where the economic, political and

cultural dimensions of life were distinguished from one another and organised according to their own proper principles. Equality was the appropriate principle for the economic sphere, for in terms of nature all human beings are equal and should have equal rights to the means of subsistence. Fraternity was the appropriate principle upon which to organise the political sphere, for in our relationships with each other we all depend alike upon the tolerance and understanding of others in order that social life can be maintained with the minimum of externally imposed restraints. Liberty was the organising principle appropriate to the cultural sphere where individuals should be free to develop their own special talents and abilities.

Some indication of the way life might be organised in accordance with such principles was provided in a manifesto entitled 'The Social State', first published in the Spring of 1933.³³ With regard to the economic sphere a system of guild socialism was advocated. The control of each industry should be devolved to those who worked in it in such a way 'that every worker has a say in the organisation of his immediate workshop, the smaller groups being included in larger, until those who are in the central administration are not controllers or directors but representatives who functionally express the policy of the whole industry.' These representatives would constitute a national Economic Chamber where the important relations of industries to each other and the community would be discussed.

The business of politics was to do with the preservation of law and order at home and with the execution of foreign policy. In a functionally devolved administration there would be no need for the Political Chamber to concern itself with economic questions, which were the preserve of the Economic Chamber. The Political Chamber would represent neither class nor party interests but regions.

The villages or wards would elect on the governing body of the country that man or woman who best represented its inhabitants. From those delegates to the county the regional and national members would be chosen. The voting would then no longer be for abstract principles or party labels but for those individuals who best represented the opinion of the region on questions of administration and on home and foreign policy.

The third element in the proposed Social State would be the Cultural Chamber, which would be concerned with the problems of general human well-being such as housing, public health, education, the arts, religion, science and philosophy. The Chamber would have as its members the best authorities on these different subjects, who would be kept informed of all the relevant problems and issues by councils spread throughout the country which would investigate and report on the conditions and needs of each region or city. Services and provisions would be designed to meet the requirements and aspirations of people rather than the greed of private profiteers. Scientific research would be directed towards human ends rather than the means of war. Once inventive genius was employed for genuinely constructive purposes people would be relieved from much of the drudgery and monotony of manual labour and machine minding, opening up the prospect of an age of leisure.

Then man will know the joy of extending knowledge for its own sake ... The arts will then become socialised not only in their application as crafts but as interpretations of man's common experience. ... In this age of mechanisation, mass production and standardisation, such a Cultural Chamber will be the safeguard of human values. That individual is free who is wise enough to discipline himself so that his physical, moral and mental activities can be a true and complete expression of his own powers. That State will be free in which the community is enabled to establish standards of cultural value which can direct political and economic policy, instead of being dominated by them.

From the start the New Britain Group pursued a far more aggressive and sustained propaganda programme than had hitherto characterised Mitrinović's public initiatives. A stream of penny leaflets and policy statements supplemented the usual round of lectures and lunch-time addresses. The pace of activities became more frantic, however, as plans were laid in the spring of 1933 for the launching of a mass circulation weekly newspaper. A major portion of the funds for this ambitious venture was provided by the wealthy daughter of a millionaire manufacturer who had come under Mitrinović's wing. It was decided to recruit a professional journalist to take editorial control of the proposed paper, and Charles Purdom, an associate of S. G. Hobson and a past editor of *Everyman*, was invited to take on the post. Purdom, the profes-

sional journalist, found himself entering a rather strange and exotic milieu.

The paper was to be called *New Britain*, and to put forward the ideas of the New Britain Group. These ideas were not different from my own. Although it seemed that I was expected to bring out a paper under that title, and discussions took place every day, I found it difficult to discover who was responsible. There were numerous people, some of them obviously with means, but I found it hard to pin anything down or to get decision on any matter, until I discovered that Dimitri Mitrinović, a strange but attractive Serbian, who was usually present, would always give a definite and immediate answer to any question I put to him and on his answers I acted. Somehow, the preparations went on, offices were secured in Bedford Square, staff was engaged, and a contract was entered into for printing. Much, however, remained vague. The New Britain Publishing Company Ltd. was formed, but who were to be the directors, what capital it was to have, and when a meeting of the company was to be held I could not ascertain. Decisions about the company taken one day were changed the next, and so far as I know from first to last the directors of the company never met. Neither could I get the lease of the office signed so that we could take possession. The delay dragged on, and the staff had to meet in the street and in local pubs, and I had to accommodate my secretary in an office of my own, the other side of London. It was a comic opera situation, and the staff, all of whom knew me, wondered what had come over me; but I assured them all would be well. A week or so before the paper appeared we got into the offices, and all was well, at least for the time being.³⁴

The first number of *New Britain Weekly* appeared on Empire Day, May 24th 1933. The choice of date was not accidental, given the significance Mitrinović attributed to the empire as a potential synthesis of both East and West and as a staging post on the way towards world federation. Moreover, he knew that any appeal to the British public had to pay some token regard to the strength of patriotic feeling. 'You can do nothing in England,' he used to remark, 'unless you unite the Bible and the Union Jack. Even their football crowds sing "Abide with Me"'.³⁵

Advertised as 'A sixpenny weekly for two pence', the paper consisted of 32 pages. It had a green cover on which was printed in solid black a map of old Britain with an orange outline of new Britain superimposed, moving towards the European continent. It

contained a weekly commentary, 'The World We Live In' which, in the first issue, opened with the words:

It is with modesty moderated with confidence that we announce ourselves and state that the event of this week is in all truth the appearance of this paper. It is well to have faith in the fact of one's earnest intention; and our endeavour will be to live and work for the renaissance and self-fulfilment of the British nation. There ought to be a New Britain; such is our heart's desire, and such is the announcement. A new world and a better humanity must arise out of the present upheaval in human existence if that existence itself is not to be fatally thwarted. The moment has come for British men and women to take charge of their national destiny. In the dark labyrinth of the human crisis it is right for this Britain to lighten the darkness and find the way.

A group of contributors was soon gathered together, including such 'regulars' as Frederick Soddy, S. G. Hobson, and J. Macmurray. Mitrinović, under his old pen-name of M. M. Cosmoi, also contributed a series of articles to the first ten issues of the paper. Written in a style reminiscent of his first series of articles in *The New Age*, and with the same title of 'World Affairs,' the main theme was an extension of the ideas developed in that first series. They consisted of an examination of the crisis facing the world in the context of its evolution to a new age, a new Christendom. According to Cosmoi/Mitrinović the crisis in Europe was nothing less than 'a planetary spasm of birth and ascension into greater and new existence.'³⁶ The responsibility for the creation of this new age lay not with the large collectivities of nation, race and class, but with alliances of individuals who were aware of themselves both as unique individuals and as constituent members of the whole of humanity. Such an order of knowledge could not be attained through 'the imperialism of Science and the dictatorship of Technology.'³⁷ What was required was the confidence and the faith to acknowledge 'the glorious truth of the immanence of Divinity in our human essence.'³⁸ A flavour of the tone and the substance of the 'cosmic' analysis can be gathered from the following extracts.

Our human essence and meaning is the realisation in enfleshed and perishable experience of the true and actual universality of the Infinite in the actual and single uniqueness of the separated and unrepeatable individuality.³⁹

The goal and glory of humanity is to realise, both in action and will and also in the understanding and presentation, the vision that Reality is Spirit, and that our own collective human reality and our single human selves are that Spirit which is God. Such is the human quest ...⁴⁰

The prophetic pronouncements covered familiar ground. It was the responsibility of the people of the West to act as the guides for the rest of humanity. It was amongst them that individualism had developed furthest, although this in turn entailed the danger that they/we would remain entrapped 'in the seductive experience of mere individualism, of materialist self-divinisation.'⁴¹ To avert this, some kind of synthesis between the worldviews of the East and West was necessary. Although people in the East had still not attained 'the proper rational individuation' of the West, they possessed its necessary counterpoint: the awareness of the organic relatedness of all things, 'the universal awareness, the experience of the inner, of the whole.'⁴² Whilst a key role fell to Israel, the Jewish people, to work towards this synthesis between the world views of East and West, the major responsibility for the future of the world order lay with the western hemisphere, and with Europe in particular:

World synthesis, the organic order of our race must be preceded by the Western synthesis and purification. Needful for the human whole is the self-attainment of the Western mankind ... The self-creation and greatness of our kingdom is at stake and is in the keeping, is given to the human care of the Western hemisphere with Europe as its seed and focus.⁴³

Such integration – world synthesis – was not something that would occur without the commitment of free and self-conscious individuals. As Mitrinović expressed it: 'The chief issue of the world-crisis is the birth of the Spirit of our Whole in our single souls. From the New Birth in singles depends the era which is in front of us: the era of world planning and planetary building, of luxurious plenty of material abundance.'⁴⁴

The articles proved as unfathomable and as frustrating to readers of *New Britain* as the first 'World Affairs' had to the readers of *The New Age*. 'Why in the name of sanity must you publish articles like the one in this week's issue by M. M. Cosmoi?' demanded one correspondent. 'Is it necessary for M. M. Cosmoi, writing on World Affairs, to use the language of mysticism? Why this tortuous and involved, not to say obscure, literary style? Why all these

strange new words?' begged another.⁴⁵ Purdom, who described Mitrinović's contributions as the most outstanding of all the work published during his time as editor of *New Britain*,⁴⁶ advised patience and recommended his own method of reading 'World Affairs' to the protestors: 'Don't expect to get more from a first reading than the atmosphere. Then put your mind at work; then read a third time with attention; and finally read a fourth time so that you may hear the music of its hidden meaning.'⁴⁷

For those without the time or inclination to persevere through to the 'hidden meaning' of M. M. Cosmoi, the early issues of the paper also carried a seven-point statement of 'What New Britain Stands For', with Purdom providing a commentary in successive issues. This was to become the public platform of what was to emerge as the New Britain Movement. In essence it was an attempt by Purdom to 'operationalise' the 'language of mysticism' uttered by Mitrinović.

1. 'The belief that an altogether new and different Britain is necessary and possible.' The call was for a reconstruction of the British economic, political and social order through individual initiative and personal alliance. In Purdom's words:

We in NEW BRITAIN are here to help to lift up the whole consciousness and feeling of the nation so that the clash of the sinister forces of Fascism and Communism may be prevented. We must succeed because nothing else is left but to expect the worst and civil war.⁴⁸

2. 'The conviction that in this emergency the initiative of every British man and woman is called for.' Just as Britain needed to make a unilateral move towards the reordering of Europe and the world, so must the British people make their own efforts to reconstruct Britain without relying on leaders bankrupt of ideas and policies.

Unless there are sufficient men and women who will translate their beliefs into action, the new society will not arise. ... Whether you live in London or a country town or are isolated in the country; whether you are a clerk or a Member of Parliament, a charwoman or a duchess; whether you are an employer or a trade unionist, you can act upon your own initiative for the creation of the Social State. You can take the first step just where you are. That is what we invite you to do. Take upon yourself the responsibility for New Britain.⁴⁹

3. 'The affirmation that the perfection of the individual is the true aim of national existence.' The twentieth century was an age of mass industry and mass politics. The development of late-capitalism and the pre-eminence of the finance houses had reduced the worker to a wage slave – individuality was lost, there was no space left for individual creativity and initiative. Democracy was mere mob-rule – everyone was free to do just what everyone else did: to vote the same way, to read the same newspapers, to pursue the same activities as everyone else. People had lost sight of the true nature of individuality: the uniqueness and divinity of each and every one. A new individualism was called for, so that 'each individual accepts responsibility, that he acknowledges the obligation to excel himself, that he has the courage to make decisions.'⁵⁰ The test of any political, economic or social order was the extent to which it helped or hindered such a development. 'Separate yourself from the mob,' readers were urged, 'be conscious of your own worth, recognise the worth of others, claim nothing for yourself that you do not allow to others ... and take upon yourself the responsibility for the new order.'⁵¹

4. 'The personal alliance of all who believe that Britain should be transformed into a Social State.' Personal alliance, according to Purdom, was the means by which Britain would be transformed. It involved the recognition that 'we are each as Gods' and therefore acknowledging the God that is likewise in our neighbour. Personal alliance was 'an attitude in which we each grant to other personalities their own worth,' whatever their station in life.⁵² Only by changing the manner in which we related to each other in all spheres of life could a total reconstruction of political, economic and cultural life be achieved.

5. 'The immediate and thorough adaptation of production and distribution to realise the new age of plenty.' This was the demand for the reform of the monetary system along the lines advocated by Frederick Soddy. Money was likened to the blood of the body; its circulation through the social body brought sustenance to all its parts. When money does not circulate, society declines and disintegrates. The dominance of the banks in the control of the money supply by means of cheques and other forms of credit had resulted in money being created and traded for private profit rather than for public benefit. If money was to perform its true function as a

circulation system, a means of transporting goods from one person or group to another, it was essential that its creation and control should be the responsibility of the state acting on behalf of the whole community. It was imperative that mechanisms be developed to ensure that the quantity of money in circulation could be adjusted so that it retained an unchanging purchasing power.

6. 'The guidance of the national wealth processes by the direct producers.' This entailed the proposal that economic life be organised in the form of guilds for each industry, to which all engaged in the industry should belong. The planning and coordinating of economic life as a whole should be the preserve of an Economic Chamber composed of representatives of the guilds. In conjunction with the Political and Cultural Chambers the Economic Chamber would be a constituent part of the three-fold Social State advocated by New Britain.

7. 'The federation of European nations leading to and forming the basis of world federation.' Until New Britain, a society of new individuals, was created, the world would be without leadership. It was the destiny of Britain to lead Europe towards federation. Moreover, by virtue of her Empire Britain should become a world force for 'Western civilisation'. As Purdom expressed it: 'New Britain, making possible European federation, acting through the Commonwealth as the organ of our civilisation, will prepare the federation of the world which is the goal of statesmanship.'⁵³

By the time Purdom had finished the seventh of his commentaries on what New Britain stood for, the sales of the paper had reached over 32,000 a week.⁵⁴ It appealed particularly to disaffected youth, disillusioned with the state of Britain, searching for answers, but unwilling to embrace fascism or communism. 'Young Britons Wake UP!' was the call. 'You are to live in the Britain of the future. Are you prepared to do your share in the building of it?'⁵⁵ The correspondence columns of the paper showed that the call was not unheeded. One student wrote from London answering the call:

NEW BRITAIN fires me with enthusiasm. There must be thousands of young men like me, who, bewildered by the state of affairs in which they find themselves, search their minds for solutions of the various problems facing the world today, and come to the conclusion that a new social order is required. Most of us conclude also that none of the established political parties can bring it into being. So far we have

been powerless individuals; NEW BRITAIN gives the leadership required.

I am studying for an examination for next year, but in 1934 all my powers will be at your disposal. Until then I shall 'do my bit' by recommending NEW BRITAIN to all my friends and acquaintances.⁵⁶

In addition to the young, the emphasis on guild socialism attracted support from socialists and trade unionists, whilst the concern with devolution drew regional nationalists and the followers of Patrick Geddes into the movement. Readers were urged to form New Britain groups in their own localities and neighbourhoods. Within two months of the paper's launch there were 57 groups established around the country. By September 1933 the number had grown to 65, 13 of which were in the London area. David Davies was appointed national organiser, with Professor J. Macmurray as President. The central office was snowed under with requests for leaflets, pamphlets and literature, whilst Watson Thomson and Davies in particular found themselves travelling the length and breadth of the country addressing meetings and local groups.

Amongst the most active of the provincial groups were those of Rugby, Birmingham, Merseyside and Oxford. Interviewed shortly before his death, one of the members of the Oxford group, who was later to become a close associate of Mitrović, recalled the feelings and experiences which led to his involvement in the New Britain movement.

In my younger days the two things I saw wrong with the world were war and violence on the one hand and ugliness on the other. This ugliness struck me largely in the form of slums and dismal houses round London. It was the ugliness which struck me before the poverty, of which when I was very young I was hardly aware. Later I came to see that this was not just – or even primarily – an aesthetic question but also – and rather – a moral one; that the disgrace was not merely the ugliness but even more the social injustice. This realisation was developing during my adolescence and by the time I got to Oxford I had it quite clearly in my mind that the two world problems to be dealt with were war and poverty.

The only political club at Oxford which seemed to be at all alive to these problems was the Communists. The Conservative, Liberal and Labour clubs seemed to be full of young people who were

practising debating for the sake of a future political career. One of my closest friends belonged to the October Club, which he persuaded me to join. I did, and stayed for about a year, but in the end I found them mindless. They just kept on repeating the same old stuff, full of catchwords and slogans, and I got to know exactly what statements would merit the abuse 'Counter-revolutionary!'. So I left.

My problem was that my sympathies were basically with the 'left', but I could not go the whole way with them. I did not accept the need for violent revolution as the Communists did – even though they said that they were only preparing for the violence which would be started by the ruling class when they found themselves being dispossessed of their wealth. Nor did I see the struggle or the solution as a class one. 'Workers and students unite!' was to me an unconvincing slogan. The world seemed to me to be more divided between those who saw and wanted to do something about the social problem and those who did not, than between proletariat and bourgeoisie. I was not willing to believe that everything about the culture which had been handed down over centuries – and which I was invited to condemn as bourgeois – was necessarily wrong and degenerate just because it had been the preserve of richer people rather than the poor. Nor was I willing to accept that all poorer people were necessarily 'goodies' and all who were better off were necessarily 'baddies'. So I saw no reason mindlessly to ally myself with one particular class of society called 'the working class', because I saw no reason to believe that a mass movement of the working class would produce a world much better than the existing one.

Consequently I was in a difficult situation. I felt very strongly the need to be active doing something about the social problem, but I found no body of people with whom I could unconditionally ally myself, because they all seemed to be grinding a partial and divisive axe. And it was in this situation that one afternoon I picked up the first number of the *New Britain Quarterly* in the Junior Common Room. I was really thrilled by it. Here was a journal which really stood for social justice and had a serious and radical programme, and at the same time maintained the best values of human culture ...

I did not at that time make any move to get in touch with anyone in London. I bought the next two numbers of the *Quarterly* and when the *New Britain Weekly* came out in May 1933 I bought it first thing every Wednesday morning and did nothing else until I had read it almost from cover to cover. One thing I found most exciting, having in my studies gained a great admiration for Plato's Republic as an ideal state, was that it made serious proposals for putting the main principles of the Republic into practical effect. Although people were

invited to start groups in the provinces, I did not myself volunteer to start a group. I was still too diffident. But when I saw that one was started I got in touch.

The Rugby group had been formed after a number of those who had been in on the founding of the movement, including Gladys MacDermot whose son Niall was then a pupil at Rugby School, held a public meeting in the town.⁵⁷ Amongst those who attended were a group of engineers who worked at the B.T.H. factory in Rugby. Some of them were also members of the Independent Labour Party. One of the women was particularly impressed by Watson Thomson's lead article in the first issue of *New Britain Quarterly*: 'There was something there that I had never read anywhere else – and I liked it.'⁵⁸ The friends began to meet regularly in each other's homes. Eventually some of them determined to pay a visit to London to meet members of the founders' group at 55 Gower Street. One of their number later recalled that first visit:

We went into this very large room. There were two or three people who greeted us very warmly and made us feel less nervous than we might have been. In a very short time there seemed to be quite a number of people who had gathered around us ... Somehow there was a great warmth about it all ... they were all so welcoming.

On a later occasion they encountered Mitrinović for the first time. Nearly half a century later this informant was still able to recall the impression he made upon her:

On the second or third time that I went to '55' I was sitting with a number of women at one end of that big room. At the other end of the room DM had come in. I saw this man for the first time. He had such a presence that you only had to look at him to know that you were in the presence of someone great. As far as I was concerned I really couldn't take my eyes off him.

Other members of the group returned from visits to London similarly moved.

The first time I met Mr. Mitrinović was in July 1933 ... Don't ask me to describe him. It is beyond description in my view. An incredible man ... My first impression was, of course, 'How un-English' ... most remarkable ... And his eyes. I shall never meet anyone like him.

Back in Rugby they began to draw their friends and associates into the group and the intensity of activities heightened with group meetings on several evenings a week, selling the weekly paper, and

organising public meetings. It was an exhilarating time, as one of their number recalled: 'The astonishing thing I remember was that there was such a release of psychic energy that you could do with a very few hours of sleep. We would read and talk until sometimes 4.00 in the morning, and then the men would go to work at 9.00.' One of the men had an old Bentley which was used as the group's means of transport:

Sometimes they would be asked to speak at other groups. On one occasion I remember we got into Robert Oliver's car and motored down to Bristol and gave a long talk there. The men never went alone, they always went as a team ... Discussions would go on after the actual meeting. We would get back to Rugby around 2.00 or 3.00 in the morning and have a post-mortem on how it had gone.

By this time the men had met Mitrinović and knew that they had been privileged to meet a very great man. From then I think they were prepared to sacrifice anything to further the aims of what they had come to know through the *New Britain Weekly* and what they had learnt in London.

They would get into the Bentley at 5.30 when they had all finished work and swish up to London as if they were just going into the next village, and come back at 4.00 or 5.00 in the morning, having been further inspired.

Such was the growth of the movement that by November 1933 there was no longer sufficient space in the weekly to print the names and addresses of group leaders around the country. Groups were in existence in 47 towns and centres whilst in addition over 30 groups had been established in the London area. Undoubtedly it all took Mitrinović and the founder members based at 55 Gower Street by surprise. Purdom, however, quickly realised that the paper had struck a rich vein of political dissent and yearning for change. In order to render this effective in national political terms a political movement, a national organisation, needed to be created that could weld all these disparate groups into a unified whole that could exert pressure and influence in the decision-making centres of the land. By August 1933 he was proposing the establishment of just such a national organisation, 'Personal Alliance for New Britain', which would provide the necessary 'body' for the 'spiritual movement' that had emerged.

His initiative struck an answering chord in many of the new members of the movement, particularly amongst those in the

London groups. On October 29th 1933 over 50 delegates from the London groups met at Chiswick to draw up a draft constitution and plan of organisation for the London area. In November Purdom returned to his original theme when, in his capacity as editor, he reviewed the achievements of the paper after six months of publication. He acknowledged the criticism that the weekly had been too vague in its proposals. The reason, he suggested, was that a nationally organised movement had still not emerged to translate the ideas and visions into specific plans of action.

A New Britain Movement needs to exist. Until a movement is in being with declared aims, a defined policy, and a programme of action, the proposals we discuss in these pages must remain vague. The ideas we put forward depend upon an organised movement for crystallization, and require the backing of an organised body of people to give them reality. That organised movement does not exist. We have called for it, but it has not come. There are groups throughout the country, and now there are coordinated groups with a central committee in London; but an organised national movement is not in being. It must exist or we shall continue to talk in the air.⁵⁹

At least a part of the frustration to which Purdom gave vent in this article can be attributed to a piece that had appeared in the paper a fortnight previously and which had obviously been penned either by Mitrinović himself or one of his close associates. Addressing the readers in the fashion of a Papal nuncio it was announced that: 'the New Britain Movement, the New Britain Alliance, is not a party. A party, political or otherwise, the New Britain Alliance can never become. It shall not be a party. All parts and parties of our nation shall be contained in our New Spirit, in our New Way.'⁶⁰

For Purdom such a stance was totally unrealistic. Moreover, there was more than a suspicion that such a view was little more than a manifestation of the selfish concern of those who had initiated something which had grown at such a pace that they were no longer able to control it. Were the founders not acting like selfish and overly-protective parents who had just discovered that their children were intending to follow their own pathways through the world having thrown off the reins of parental control? Thus, in urging the creation of a formally constituted national political movement, Purdom observed that such a step would involve the 'surrender of egotism, the giving up of cherished ideas, and the

painful effort of getting down to earth ... It is the end of private property in the ideas which the movement exists to further ... we have to trust not only the people we know but those we don't know and the unseen powers.'⁶¹

It was clear to the informed observer that a split was developing within the ranks of the young movement. At its core the conflict centred on the nature and form that the New Britain movement was to take: whether it was to remain as a 'spiritual movement' concerned with propagating new ideas for the new individuals that would be at the heart of a New Britain, or whether it should be transformed into a conventional political movement, actively engaged in organising not only to promote new ideas but eventually to attain the political power to implement such ideas and proposals through conventional parliamentary processes. In terms of personnel the split was between the original founding members centred around Mitrinović and based at Gower Street, the Central Group, and certain activists who had joined the movement and whose strength was reflected in the London group and certain of the Yorkshire groups, Leeds and Sheffield in particular.

Mitrinović once remarked that he was a Bakuninist rather than a Marxist. In his attitude to the issue of organising for change he certainly revealed similarities with the nineteenth-century revolutionary anarchist. Both were opposed to hierarchically organised political movements that aspired to capture state power. Like Bakunin, Mitrinović believed that revolutionary change was indivisible as a process from individual self-change, and both regarded the conscious initiative of an active minority as indispensable to this process. The New Britain Movement, for Mitrinović, was essentially a means of communicating a new vision and worldview to as wide a range of individuals as possible, to individuals who would then try to translate their newly found insights into the realm of everyday practice in the home, the community and at work. As he had written in *New Britain Weekly*, 'from the New Birth in singles depends the era which is in front of us'.⁶² By establishing new kinds of relationships with those with whom they came in contact the New Britons would act as the leaven in the dough of society, through their example and their deeds transforming the very basis of society – the realm of everyday life. The new society would thus grow and evolve gradually from the grassroots upwards.

This refusal of the founder members of the central group to accept that decisions should be reached by conventional democratic means created a great deal of confusion and anger amongst those who, like Purdom, wished to transform the movement into a political party. A conference of group representatives was held at Rugby on Sunday, November 19th 1933 to discuss the issue of the draft constitution that had been drawn up by certain members of the London groups. It was reported in *New Britain Weekly* that 'the frankness of speech and success in reaching a common understanding showed a high degree of realisation of the spirit and purpose of New Britain.' However, it was agreed that 'the question of constitution was premature' but that those who had been involved in drawing up the draft should form themselves into a Provisional National Council with the responsibility of drafting a final document.⁶³ Headquarters of this Provisional National Council were established at 3 Gordon Square, London and the members returned to further conferences at Rugby (December 17th 1933), Birmingham (January 1934) and London (February 25th 1934) in their search for agreement on a formal statement of the aims, objects, and organisational form of the movement. On each occasion they were frustrated by the founder members who, fighting to retain guardianship of the direction of the movement, refused to countenance voting on such issues. David Davies, at the London meeting, argued strongly that 'the sole authority for all matters relating to aims, policy, literature and organisation must be obtained by agreement and that decisions by voting belong to Old Britain and must be scrapped.'⁶⁴

In a statement issued after the London conference, representatives from some of the provincial groups gave vent to their anger and disenchantment:

The founders of the New Britain Alliance have consistently failed to inform any of these Conferences in specific terms of their position on or of their claims to authority within the Alliance ... So far as we Provincial Groups are concerned there is little doubt that the Founders knew perfectly well all the time what was their attitude to the Alliance. They would not permit any authority to pass to a National Council elected by the Groups, nor would they allow an elected Committee to decide the principles of Aims and Policy. This attitude is perfectly consistent providing that they 'put their cards on the table' and not refrain from withholding from the members the true position.

The authors of this statement concluded that the 'dictatorial attitude' adopted by the founders meant that it was pointless to continue with the efforts to reach an agreement on the nature and form of the movement. This view was reiterated by a member of the Sheffield group who, in a letter to Watson Thomson, explored the nature of the division within the movement as he saw it.

Do not think that we underestimate your religious or spiritual ideals. As a result of close contact with some of the members we now realise what you mean by New Britain, it is not easy to explain but it is the feeling of unity to be obtained by working mutually together for a common purpose. The common purpose is a good one but the mutual feeling of comradeship and unity, a feeling of oneness in God is the main idea and to live it is I now understand New Britain ...

Well it is quite a good and beautiful ideal for those who want that sort of thing, I am either not ready for it or I have passed it and it does not matter which. My idea of New Britain is entirely a material one. I want to alter the environment so that individuals will have an opportunity to express themselves according to their own desires. To give them leisure so that they will be compelled to develop their individuality. Whether they join a religious society or whether they go their own way is a matter entirely for themselves to decide. I am prepared to prove that the idea of converting them to certain religious schools of thought does not help in the least to evolve their personality, individuality, ego, soul or whatever name you like to give it.

There is a certain amount of satisfaction to be gained by working together along mutual lines to attain a common end, to individually feel this spirit of unity. It is the sort of thing which is behind most religious revivals. Such a religious revival might conceivably bring about the desired change in environment that I desire but I should be prepared to lay very long odds against it.

Then there is the selfish idea. If I were to join in this New Britain spirit I should gain because of this mutual contact and feeling of unity. In my opinion it is a high form of selfishness. I don't care a damn about myself and I shan't last very long in this particular body anyway ... You are offering the suffering man in the street relief in the spiritual sense. I am not ... We want to concentrate on improving the environment and making the world a better place, a better geographical New Britain with better conditions of working, with more wealth, with less hours of work and with more leisure and always with the means to enjoy the leisure.

You will reply that you want the same. Agreed but your wanting is a means to an end, the end being the individual. I ignore your end and want the objective to be the better conditions.

Now perhaps you realise why we cannot be in the same organisation and why we speak two different languages or to put it better why we mean two different things from the same words. We feel that you ought to have said straight out at the First Rugby Conference. That it is incompatible with our views to organise a New Britain along democratic lines. That we are the founders and that we mean to be the sole authority and that we shall not recognise any other organisation. That the job is a personal one and that the environment is merely a means to secure this personal feeling of unity. We should have saved a lot of time, a lot of money and we should not have had our patience tried by the inconsistencies of Davies or the inefficiency of Lohan ...⁶⁵

The split in the movement was reflected in the pages of *New Britain Weekly* where, in the space allotted to news of the groups, there was clear division between the London groups that were listed under New Britain Alliance with headquarters at 3 Gordon Square, and the section devoted to news from the provinces appearing under the name of the New Britain Movement with 'Sammy' Lohan as national organiser based at the central group's office in Gower Street.

Once the nature and the extent of the division in the movement had become clearer to the parties involved, the scene was set for a decisive struggle to control the direction and nature of the movement. This was to take place at the first national conference scheduled for the last weekend in March 1934 at Leamington Spa. In preparation the London groups held a one-day conference on March 11th 1934 at the University of London Club in Gower Street, at which the issue of the constitution was once again discussed. Following this meeting a final draft of the proposed constitution was sent out to the provincial groups a few days prior to the Leamington conference. It proposed a federated organisational structure for the movement with groups coordinating at district and area levels up to the regional level, with councils of delegates from each level responsible for coordinating group activities in the districts, areas and regions. The supreme coordinating body was to be a National Council made up of four representatives from each region, with the exception of the London region which would have twelve co-opted members and just two representatives

of the 'central group' – defined as 'those who founded the movement, and those who have since joined them or shall do so'. As it was proposed that decisions within the National Council were to be arrived at by a three quarters majority if unanimity proved impossible to achieve, it was obvious that the proposed constitution, if accepted at the Leamington conference, would mean the virtual emasculation of the power of the central group members.

Over 300 people attended the Leamington conference. There was, according to Charles Purdom who took the chair at most of the sessions, 'every sign of the initiation of a strong movement.'⁶⁶ In fact, the outcome of the conference was to be the defeat of the London group and those who sought to put New Britain onto a proper organisational footing as a means to becoming a genuinely mass-based party. The first sessions on the evening of Friday March 31st passed uneventfully enough, although there was a noticeable contrast between the first two speakers. Professor G. E. C. Catlin, the husband of Vera Brittain, addressed himself to the question of how to avoid a violent revolution, whilst the second speaker proclaimed his faith in Marxism and his belief that the fundamental question to be tackled was the abolition of private property. This was Jack Murphy, who had been active as a labour organiser and who had been attracted towards New Britain by its emphasis on workers' control and management of industry. For him the issue was clear: 'The New Britain of our aim must be a Socialist Britain free from the profit motive, free from financial swindlers, indeed, a classless Britain. Our task is to ensure the movement will dare to be Socialist and build a new Socialist Britain.'⁶⁷

David Davies suggested in his autobiography that Murphy had been brought along to the conference by the central group 'with the specific object of injecting an upsetting element into the proceedings and bringing the conference to nought.'⁶⁸ Whether or not this was in fact the case, Murphy's strident call for socialism from the platform must have been a little disconcerting to Charles Purdom and the members of the London group who, in pursuit of their aim of transforming New Britain into a mass movement with wide political appeal, had been attempting to attract a number of business people into their ranks. Certainly, Murphy, an experienced and powerful public speaker, was to make his presence felt on a number of crucial occasions during the weekend. Not least on the

Saturday morning when Andrew Campbell, one of the leaders of the London group and a major advocate of an organisational overhaul for the movement, presented his proposals for a practical programme. Campbell tried to convince the assembly that his programme of industrial planning and monetary reform would 'antagonise few interests and if prosecuted with vigour and efficiency should be applied in a very short time.' His proposals promised 'the immediate abolition of poverty, a general increase in the standard of life, increased time for leisure, and a people more receptive to the higher ideals of New Britain.'⁶⁹

In fact, Campbell's proposals came in for sharp criticism from significant sections of the gathering. He advocated industrial planning without specifying who was to do the planning; he made no mention of workers owning the means of production; and he envisaged the maintenance of production for profit, at least 'to start with'. It was suggested that Campbell's programme, in essence, 'differed in no way from the claims made in the Fascist programme.'⁷⁰ In some frustration Campbell appealed to the conference: if only they would water down their antagonism to the capitalist class he could guarantee the recruitment of 10,000 new members into the movement, thus helping to make it a truly effective political organisation with mass appeal. At this Murphy stood up and retorted that 'If you went a little further and turned it into a capitalist party, I could bring you in 50,000 new members!'

Saturday evening was devoted to an address from Frederick Soddy on monetary reform and social credit as a prelude to the discussions on the constitutional proposals that were scheduled for the following morning. However, just before the close of the Soddy meeting, at around 10.15 pm, Lilian Slade stood up to propose 'That this conference should solve the problems of leadership which must arise in the early stages of a movement by appointing six of those here who obviously had the confidence of the delegates. And one other who was known to many.'⁷¹ The six present she nominated were Professor Soddy, Rev. A. D. Belden, Lt. Colonel J. V. Delahaye, Jack Murphy, David Davies, and Winifred Gordon Fraser. The seventh was Mr. H.F.T. Rhodes. So powerfully did she address the gathering that her proposal was accepted by general acclaim. One of those present recalled the evening many years later:

I remember Lilian Slade getting up and making a most marvellous statement. She really was inspired. She carried it off beautifully. She gave a potted biography of each of these people that were proposed. She did it marvellously and was almost on fire ... Most impressive. After all the years I can still remember that. It was carried of course by acclamation. I can remember at one stage my friend who was sitting next to me said, 'Isn't it about time we got up and cheered?' We were so moved. So we all got up and cheered.

The address from the platform might have been moving, just as the cheers of this informant were undoubtedly genuine, but what they were witnessing was the execution of a coup. Members of the central group had met with Mitrinović the previous evening. Fearing that the constitutional proposals that were to be presented on the Sunday might be accepted, with the consequent erosion of their guardian-like position within the movement, they had planned their pre-emptive strike and had got away with it. They might dismiss formal voting procedures as belonging to 'Old Britain', but they could rival the most devious of the old-world politicians when the occasion and their own interests demanded it. Indeed, one has to feel some sympathy for the outflanked Andrew Campbell who, the following morning, had the task of presenting the constitutional proposals to the conference in the aftermath of the previous evening's events. Moreover, he had to contend with Winifred Gordon Fraser, one of the key movers behind the coup, who, whilst claiming to recognise the advantages of organising the movement efficiently, objected that 'to impose an elaborate system in order to strip of authority the very persons who are responsible for what exists was a very Old Britain idea of democracy!'⁷²

Little headway was made with the discussion as people were too busy trying to find out what had happened the previous evening, arguing about the decision to appoint seven leaders and debating the legitimacy of the means adopted to obtain that decision. In the afternoon Charles Purdom expressed from the chair his dissatisfaction with the proceedings and with the decisions arrived at. Again it was left to Jack Murphy to defend publicly the interests of the central group. People had nothing to fear, the new leaders were not going to dissolve any organisations that the members had created, they would draw up a new constitution and present it to the movement, the new leaders represented the true spirit of the movement, objections to their appointment were 'formal objections and not in keeping with the spirit of the movement.'⁷³

Meanwhile some people were walking out in disgust and dismay. It was decided to put the issue of the seven leaders to the conference once again. Of the 127 who voted, only two opposed the appointment of the new leadership.

The conference ended the next day. According to one report, 'the sense of national crisis and of confidence in the future of New Britain were deeply felt as the conference broke up.' The sense of national crisis reflected the state of reality, for the confidence in the future of New Britain as a movement was completely misplaced. Within a week Purdom had resigned as editor of the weekly. In his farewell to his readers he explained he had taken the office on the understanding that 'there must be a national organisation with its ultimate aims defined and a practical programme of immediate action.' He was leaving because that understanding could not be acted upon. 'The moment is too soon. The movement is not yet ready to be born.'⁷⁴ Certainly there was no possibility that Mitrinović would allow New Britain to become the kind of movement Purdom envisaged. After Leamington, control of the direction of the movement was firmly in the grip of the central group.

Davies took over the editorial chair vacated by Purdom, but as he recalled, 'to sit was all I did. I was editor only in name. The real editor was Mitrinović.'⁷⁵ In the weeks immediately following the conference Davies, Thomson, Lohan and others toured the countryside addressing groups, trying to raise morale and the funds necessary to keep the weekly paper alive. By July 1934 it began to seem as if the movement might survive the political chicanery of Leamington and the consequent defection of a substantial number of committed followers and activists. People were looking forward to the second national conference which was to be held at Glastonbury over the August bank holiday weekend. Then, in the July 4th issue of the weekly, Mitrinović called for Britain to rearm, to impose a peace on Europe and forestall the impending European bloodbath. Those who sought peace must prepare for war. A fascist Germany would disfigure the human race and the universe. A new war would mark 'the end of Europe and of Great Britain in the hell of bacterial and gas suicide of Christendom.'⁷⁶

There was an immediate outcry from the pacifists among the ranks of New Britain and those with a commitment to international socialism. The Southend group called upon the seven nominal

leaders to clarify their position. On July 27th, having failed to obtain a satisfactory response, they resolved to sever their connection with the movement, having recognised that 'the Socialist advocacy of the New Britain Movement is inextricably entangled with, and irretrievably marred by, a simultaneous panic propaganda of *materialistic religious militarism* which can only serve to strengthen the forces of reaction and help to plunge this country into another European War ...'⁷⁷ The Secretary of the Coventry group recorded that the issue of re-armament revealed a 'fundamental cleavage of opinion ... resulting in the most heated discussion in the history of the group,' and urged the central group 'in future to avoid mentioning rearmament or any other term likely to antagonise the left wing and pacifist elements in the movement.'⁷⁸

Whilst a number of groups joined Southend in severing their connection with the movement, others were complaining about the quality of the weekly following Purdom's resignation. The articles were too heavy and required too much concentration from the readers. There was a lack of consistency in policy between articles – whilst this might be stimulating it was also extremely confusing for the average reader. In addition, at least one of the seven so-called leaders found the demands too exacting. On July 19th 1934 Harry Rhodes wrote a letter of resignation to Watson Thomson:

My reasons are quite definite. I am very busy and pressed. I never have more than three hours notice of any meeting, and then I do not know what the meeting is to be about. Last night is an excellent example: a number of people, I don't know how many or whom called to ask me to attend an urgent meeting. Of course, I was not in. I never am unless you arrange to see me, so I didn't get your message until too late ... I am not withdrawing out of annoyance or anything of that sort. I merely feel that my position is impossible.⁷⁹

Rhodes, in fact, was only witness to a fraction of the chaos and frenetic activity that characterised the life of the central group during this period as they struggled to maintain regular publication of the weekly paper. It had never carried a great deal of advertising and, perhaps not surprisingly for a paper advertised as the 'sixpenny weekly for tuppence', it had never made a profit. As the membership of the movement declined, so did the readership of the paper and the revenue from sales. The supply of funds from original patrons of the paper such as Gladys MacDermot was also

drying up. David Davies recalled the nightmare situation in which he found himself as he sat in the editor's chair:

The paper had exhausted its initial funds, so that it experienced increasingly enormous difficulty in keeping alive, and its circulation went catastrophically down. We literally did not know from week to week whether the next number would appear or not. I was not initiated into the mystery of the paper's finance; but on occasions I was asked to accompany a few people to interview some wealthy or influential person. Among many others I went to see the late Lord Allen of Hurtwood. He was very charming but I came away empty-handed. There would be weeks when salaries were delayed. Towards the end, the money for printing had to be found for each issue before the printer would put it on the machine. Many a time I was informed at luncheon hour on the Monday when we went to press that there was no money to print. Miraculously it turned up.⁸⁰

The fact that the money to pay the printer kept on turning up for as long as it did was due less to the intervention of supra-mundane forces than to the efforts of the central group who went on regular 'money runs' around the country, wheedling donations out of wealthy individuals and loyal New Britain groups. Watson Thomson was later to recall one such run he made when he hired a car and sped around the country searching for funds, including £10 from the then Archbishop of York, William Temple; returning to London within 48 hours with just over £700 to pay the printer to put the paper to press. It could not be sustained, and the August 8th 1934 issue which came out during the second national conference at Glastonbury was the last 'weekly organ of national renaissance' to be published under the banner of the New Britain Movement, although a fortnightly news-sheet *Eleventh Hour Emergency Bulletin for New Britain* continued to be published.⁸¹

Glastonbury has long been renowned as a spiritual centre of Britain and the significance of the venue for the second national conference of the New Britain Movement was not lost on those who gathered there over the weekend of August 4th-6th 1934. Although the coffers to finance the weekly paper were empty, delegates from around the country arrived in good heart and high expectations. The Rugby group, which by this time was publishing its own occasional magazine (*New England*), addressed a personal message to all New Britain groups in the issue of July 25th: 'All men and women who have the vision of New Britain before them,

shall make the Glastonbury Conference of August 1934 great history. For this we shall take personal responsibility.' Unaware that the seven leaders who had been nominated at the Leamington Conference had, in fact, never met together as a body, the gathering of nearly 200 looked forward to a thorough discussion and examination of the constitution and statement of New Britain aims that had been promised them the previous spring. A document emanating from the central group was in fact presented to the conference and was eventually endorsed. It reiterated the view that the social, economic and political crises facing Britain and the world were all part of a single process, that humanity was now at a turning point in its evolution. A new order was imminent, a new age which could only be brought into being by new methods rather than through the bankrupt policies and programmes of existing parties and institutions. The introduction of this new order was not so much a technical problem, for 'man has now the knowledge and power to order his communal life in such a way that none need fear want'. Rather it was the challenge of creating the necessary will to bring it about – 'it is for want of vision that people are perishing'. The way to bring about the wider societal changes was through individual change and a transformation of social relationships – the key lay in the creation of situations wherein 'each individual gives the same recognition to the personal uniqueness and the opinions and interests of others as he would wish them to grant to him.'

Such calls to love one's neighbour as oneself, however, remain little more than empty if well-meaning rhetoric unless they are supported by clear guidelines as to how the structures of society might be reorganised in order to facilitate such a proposed transformation of social relationships. Consequently, the document reiterated the programme and policies of New Britain. It called for the reorganisation of the political decision-making system in line with the twin principles of decentralisation and federation; the establishment of the three-fold state with the functional division of power in accordance with the different spheres or dimensions of life – economic, cultural and political. There was a repeat of the demand for workers' control of industry and production through the guild system with ownership of the means of production being vested in the community. There was the advocacy of a 'universal citizen's allowance' which would free people from economic insecurity; and the reform of the monetary system along the lines developed by

Soddy. In addition, looking forward to the eventual establishment of a world federation, the conference called for the transformation of the British empire into a genuine commonwealth of free peoples, the establishment of a Federation of Europe and the conclusion of an Anglo-American Atlantic alliance.

As regards the organisation of the movement itself it was proposed, and eventually accepted after some discussion, that control and direction should be lodged with the central group. However, it was pointed out that membership of the central group was open to all, that it was not a specifically geographical group but was open to those who possessed the necessary degree of devotion to New Britain to acknowledge it 'not merely as an intellectual or political programme, but as a way of life, demanding nothing less than their complete dedication.' Whilst the central group members were to be the guardians of the movement, the basic unit of organisation was acknowledged to be the local group which should be 'autonomous and self-moving' within the guidelines established by central group members.

The constitutional proposals were eventually passed with only four dissenters amongst the 160 present. The formal conference finished on the afternoon of Monday August 6th, but for those who remained a week-long summer school had been organised – lectures, demonstrations and classes by the Valerie Cooper School of Movement, and cricket in between the rain-showers. For those who participated it was a memorable communal experience. As the report of the conference that appeared in the Autumn issue of *New Britain* claimed:

New Britain as a movement made an important step forward in action by the acceptance of a clear statement of aims – but the value of the eight days spent at Glastonbury was a new experience of personal relationships in a new order without which political agreement would be a mere continuance of the old.⁸²

This statement was a clear pointer to the direction that what was essentially the 'rump' of the movement was henceforth to take. Without a weekly paper, with funds exhausted, it became clear even to the most committed and optimistic that the days of New Britain as a popular public initiative for the re-ordering of individual and social life were numbered. This was acknowledged in a letter that Watson Thomson wrote in his capacity as Secretary of the

Movement, inviting people to attend the first of a number of conferences held at 46 Lancaster Gate through the winter of 1934-35: 'Our feeling here is that the next phase should be one of interior concentration, personal equipment and research rather than of enlarged publicity.'

At the first of these, held over the weekend of December 15th-16th, it was resolved that the New Britain Movement should devolve into four separate, if related, organisational forms, each focusing on a major aspect of the overall programme of the movement. Thus it was decided to inaugurate a League for the National Dividend, a British League for European Federation, a League for the Three-fold State, and a House of Industry League. Although each of these Leagues met at some stage or another, issued leaflets and had their own letterheads, it was really only the House of Industry League that developed beyond a small study circle into anything approximating a public organisation.

S. G. Hobson accepted the invitation to become President of the fledgling organisation whilst an even greater luminary of the trade union movement, Ben Tillett, was prevailed upon to become one of the vice-presidents. The inaugural meeting of the League was held on August 14th 1936 when its purpose was announced: 'to implement the logical purpose of the Trade Unions: namely, the total abolition of the wage system, and the ensuing change in status of all those engaged in industrial production.'⁸³ This was to be achieved by vesting formal ownership of the means of production 'in the Crown and the People through the House of Commons, with actual control of the production processes residing in the industrial guilds which would be represented in a new Economic Chamber, to be known as the House of Industry.'⁸⁴

During the Autumn of 1936 and the Spring of 1937 the League established itself as an active pressure group oriented particularly towards influencing trade unionists. Weekend conferences were organised, weekly lecture-discussion meetings were held in London, provincial groups were established, and articles placed in the trade union press. Office accommodation was obtained in the National Trade Union Club in New Oxford Street where the secretary, Arthur Peacock, was later to become secretary of the League.

Although Peacock had read Mitrinović's articles in the pages of *New Britain* it was at the Trade Union Congress in 1936 that he

was first approached by ‘this far-seeing, yet rather perplexing man’, as he was later to describe Mitrinović. ‘I want to know Arthur Peacock. Not the journalist who is secretary of the National Trade Union Club, but Arthur Peacock, who wears the big black sombrero and red tie.’ Once again, Mitrinović was fishing for a new ally, someone with access to circles not normally open to Serbian exiles or to the young people around him who did most of the mundane administrative work of the League. As with most people upon whom he turned his charm, Mitrinović made a lasting impression upon Peacock who, like so many others before him, could not help but notice the strange uses to which he adapted the English language and the speed with which he rushed from one subject to another in his discourse. He was to recall something of the style and substance of their first exchange.

Until all of us ...working for the new order of man understand each other completely, until we know each other in every relationship, are prepared to accept one another whole-heartedly and to share all we have, pooling our resources for the common good, we shall achieve just nothing ... In politics everyone lives to cut the other fellow’s throat. The new order of man demands new ways, new standards, new ideas. You must bring the new spirit of personal alliance into your unions, your General Council, otherwise your leaders will be like the old leaders, your party like the old parties, and all of you will be no better than the people you condemn.⁸⁶

According to Peacock the House of Industry League had some influence with engineers and intellectuals, but gained ‘sparse support from trade unionists generally.’⁸⁷ Consequently a new medium was created in 1937 – the Council for Workers’ Control of Industry, with the same platform as the League but catering specifically for trade unionists. The activities of both organisations continued until the outbreak of the Second World War that Mitrinović had foreseen so many years previously. The war succeeded in bringing down the curtain not only on public ventures such as the House of Industry League, but also dispersed the group of people who had formed themselves into an intimate circle around Mitrinović, forming a household which became the main focus of his attention in the years after the New Britain Movement. It was with these people that he worked to create the seed of the new social order in microcosm, and it is to an examination of their life and

experiences in and around Bloomsbury during the latter half of the 1930s that attention will be paid in the next chapter.

NOTES

1. Mairet (1966), p. xxvi.
2. Mairet (1981), p. 133.
3. It has been suggested by an associate of Mitrinović's that a further explanation for the range and short life of the projects might lie in the fact that he was continually searching for the right formula to get something going that would 'take off' of its own accord, without requiring constant impulsion from him – thus leaving him free to concentrate his energies on developing the notion of senate. See Chapter 7 below.
4. They were both living at Ditchling at this time.
5. Leaflet of 'Eleventh Hour Flying Clubs,' New Atlantis Foundation archives.
6. J. V. Delahaye et al, *Politics: A Discussion of Realities*, London: C. W. Daniel, 1929.
7. *Politics*, p. 25.
8. *Politics*, p. 32.
9. *Politics*, p. 55.
10. *Politics*, pp. 32-3.
11. *Politics*, p. 166.
12. *Politics*, p. 74.
13. *Politics*, p. 76.
14. *Politics*, p. 180.
15. *Politics*, p. 179.
16. *Politics*, p. 160.
17. *Politics*, p. 163.
18. *Politics*, p. 163.
19. NEG leaflet, n.d., New Atlantis Foundation archives.
20. Letter from Sir Charles Trevelyan to W. G. Fraser, November 17th 1931. New Atlantis Foundation archives.
21. Geddes died on April 17th 1932. His position as President of the NEG was taken by Arthur Kitson.
22. Thomson, pp. 7-8.
23. Note in files of NEG, New Atlantis Foundation archives.
24. Taken from notes in files of NEG, source unknown, in New Atlantis Foundation archives.
25. Davies, p. 115.
26. *New Britain Quarterly*, vol. I, no. I, October 1932, p. 23.
27. Davies, p. 127.

28. Quoted by Davies, p. 127.
29. Quoted in Arthur Peacock, *Yours Fraternally*, London: Pendulum, 1945, p.84.
30. *The New Atlantis*, vol. 1, no. 1, October 1933.
31. Davies, pp. 124-8.
32. NEG leaflet, undated, New Atlantis Foundation archives.
33. *New Britain: Quarterly Organ for National Renaissance*, vol. 1, no. 2, Jan-March 1933, pp. 52-3.
34. C. B. Purdom, *Life Over Again*, London: J. M. Dent, 1951, p. 153.
35. Quoted in Davies, p. 131.
36. *New Britain Weekly*, vol. 1, no. 1, May 24th 1933, p. 7.
37. *New Britain Weekly*, vol. 1, no. 3, June 7th 1933, p. 74.
38. *New Britain Weekly*, vol. 1, no. 2, May 31st 1933, p. 39.
39. *New Britain Weekly*, vol. 1, no. 4, June 14th 1933, p. 106.
40. *New Britain Weekly*, vol. 1, no. 9, July 19th 1933, p. 266.
41. *New Britain Weekly*, vol. 1, no. 4, June 14th 1933, p. 105.
42. *New Britain Weekly*, vol. 1, no. 4, June 14th 1933, p. 105.
43. *New Britain Weekly*, vol. 1, no. 9, July 19th 1933, p. 265.
44. *New Britain Weekly*, vol. 1, no. 10, July 26th 1933, p. 298.
45. *New Britain Weekly*, vol. 1, no. 5, June 21st 1933, p. 153.
46. Purdom, p. 154.
47. *New Britain Weekly*, vol. 1, no. 5, June 21st 1933, p. 144.
48. *New Britain Weekly*, vol. 1, no. 7, July 5th 1933, p.208.
49. *New Britain Weekly*, vol. 1, no. 8, July 12th 1933, p. 240.
50. *New Britain Weekly*, vol. 1, no. 9, July 19th 1933, p. 272.
51. *New Britain Weekly*, vol. 1, no. 9, July 19th 1933, p. 272.
52. *New Britain Weekly*, vol. 1, no. 10, July 26th 1933, p. 304.
53. *New Britain Weekly*, vol. 1, no. 13, August 16th 1933, p. 400.
54. Purdom, p. 156.
55. *New Britain Weekly*, vol. 1, no. 10, July 26th 1933, p. 315.
56. *New Britain Weekly*, vol. 1, no. 7, July 5th 1933, p. 218.
57. An associate and patron of Mitrinović.
58. 'Ourselves Announced,' *New Britain Quarterly*, vol. 1, no. 1, October 1932, pp. 2-3.
59. *New Britain Weekly*, vol. 1, no. 26, November 15th 1933, p. 816.
60. *New Britain Weekly*, vol. 1, no. 24, November 1st 1933, p. 737.
61. *New Britain Weekly*, vol. 1, no. 26, November 15th 1933, p. 816.
62. *New Britain Weekly*, vol. 1, no. 10, July 26th 1933, p. 298.
63. *New Britain Weekly*, vol. 2, no. 28, November 29th 1933, p. 64.
64. 'The position as a result of the London Conference, February 25th 1934,' *New Britain Alliance*, mimeo, New Atlantis Foundation archives.

65. Letter in New Britain files, New Atlantis Foundation archives. 'Sammy' Lohan was one of the young members of the central group around Mitrinović.
66. Purdom, p. 156.
67. *New Britain Weekly*, vol. 2, no. 47, April 11th 1934, p. 652.
68. Davies, p. 135.
69. *New Britain Weekly*, vol. 2, no. 47, April 11th 1934, p. 652.
70. *New Britain Weekly*, vol. 2, no. 47, April 11th 1934, p. 652.
71. *New Britain Weekly*, vol. 2, no. 47, April 11th 1934, p. 655.
72. *New Britain Weekly*, vol. 2, no. 47, April 11th 1934, p. 655.
73. *New Britain Weekly*, vol. 2, no. 47, April 11th 1934, p. 656.
74. *New Britain Weekly*, vol. 2, no. 48, April 18th 1934, p. 672.
75. Davies, p. 135.
76. *New Britain Weekly*, vol. 3, no. 59, July 4th 1934, p. 177.
77. Letter from Southend group, July 27th 1934. New Britain files in New Atlantis Foundation archives.
78. Extracts from letters from G. A. Judson to Southend group and to 'central group'. Both dated July 19th 1934. New Britain files in New Atlantis Foundation archives.
79. New Britain files, New Atlantis Foundation archives.
80. Davies, p. 136.
81. In February 1935 a new weekly was started, *The Eleventh Hour*, which continued in publication until July 1935, but by then New Britain as a movement had just about finished.
82. *New Britain*, vol. I, no. I, (new series), Autumn 1934.
83. Report in *The Trade Unionist*, September 1936.
84. Document (n.d.) in House of Industry League files, New Atlantis Foundation archives.
85. Peacock, p. 87.
86. Peacock, pp. 87-88.
87. Peacock, p. 85.